OBITUARIES

Odd no mention of JFK assassination

Former Secret Service Chief James Rowley, 84, Dies

Post 11/2/92

James J. Rowley, 84, who served as director of the U.S. Secret Service from 1961 to 1973, died of congestive heart failure Nov. 1 at his home in Leisure World.

He joined the Secret Service in New York in 1938, transferred to Washington the following year, and was named chief of its presidential protective division in 1947. He held that post until being named Secret Service director.

Over the years, Mr. Rowley served under six presidents and played a leading role in protecting them during tumultuous and historic times. During World War II, he helped set up advance security for President Franklin D. Roosevelt at his wartime meetings with other Allied leaders at Casablanca, Tunis, Cairo, Tehran and Yalta.

He was in charge of President Harry S. Truman's advance security detail at the Potsdam Conference in the closing days of World War II. On one memorable occasion in 1948, he awoke Truman to inform the Missourian that he had upset Gov. Thomas E. Dewey (R-N.Y.) to win the presidency in his own right.

Mr. Rowley was chief of the security detail when it foiled the bloody attempt by Puerto Rican nationalists to shoot Truman in 1950. One White House guard was killed and two were wounded in the fighting.

He directed the Secret Service detail that accompanied President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower to Korea in 1952 when the five-star army general met U.N. forces arrayed against hostile communist forces.

As he was being sworn in as Secret Service director in September 1961 by Treasury Secretary Douglas Dillon, a smiling President John F. Kennedy dropped in to greet Mr. Rowley's family and chat with reporters. Kennedy recalled that he had first met the future director "in the 1948 campaign when he pushed me aside to clear the way" for Truman.

As director, Mr. Rowley became head of not just the presidential security detail but also a force that investigated crimes. As part of the Treasury Department, the Secret Service investigates forgery and counterfeiting. Over the years, in days of increasing violence that included the loss of Kennedy to an assassin's bullets, the Secret Service also took on added security duties.

The service now protects former presidents, their families, presidential and vice presidential candidates, as well as visiting heads of state and government. It was during his years as director that the Executive Protective Service (now the uniformed division of the Secret Service) was established. The EPS was placed in charge of physical security of the White House and American security at foreign diplomatic missions in the Washington area.

Mr. Rowley was instrumental in establishing the Consolidated Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.

Over the years, he received a variety of awards from government and private groups ranging from the National Civil Service League to the Touchdown Club of Washington. In 1968, he was awarded both the Treasury Department's Exceptional Service Award, the highest award recommended by the Treasury secretary, and the President's Award for Distinguished Federal Civilian Service.

Mr. Rowley, a native of New York, earned two law degrees at St. John's University in Jamaica, N.Y. He was an investigator with the New York State Banking Department before beginning his federal career in 1937. After working as an FBI special agent and briefly practicing law, he joined the Secret Service.

Survivors include his wife of 52 years, the former Mabel Rita Cluen, of Leisure World; three daughters, Claudia Dailey of Columbia, Linda Graham of Chevy Chase and Donna Ryan of Alexandria; a brother, the Rev. Francis P. Rowley, S.J., of Blauvelt, N.Y.; a sister, Marge Borise of Greenwich, Conn.; and eight grandchildren.